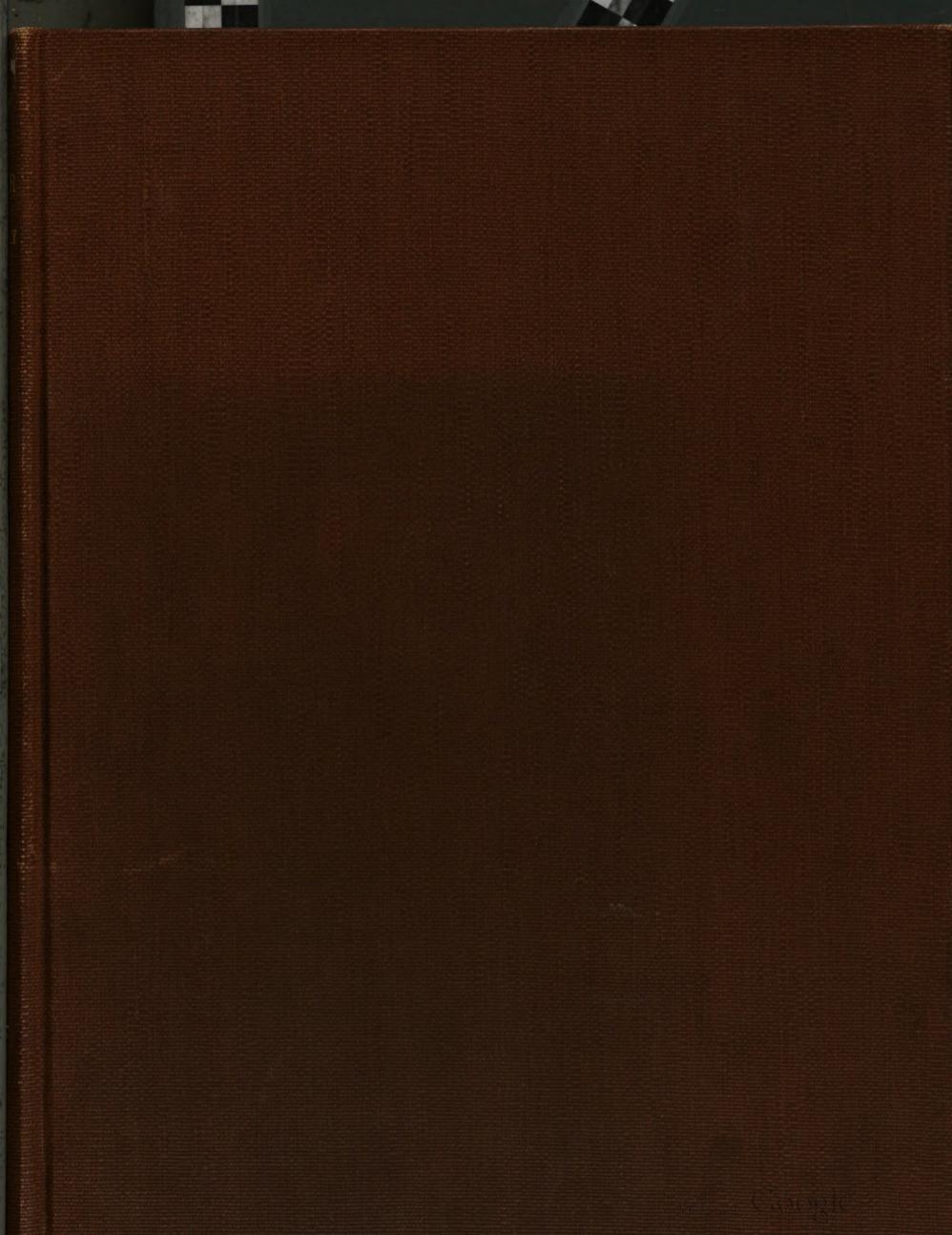
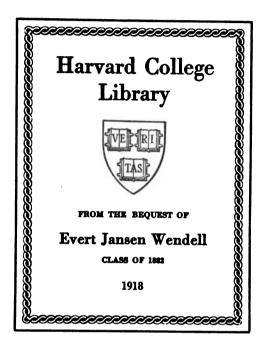
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PREFACE.

THE original title of this Oratorio is "Des Heilands Letzte Stunden" (The Last Hours of the The awful and interesting event which Spohr has selected for musical expression, has given birth to several Oratorios of great celebrity, particularly the "Tod Jesu" of Graun, the "Sieben Worte des Erlösers am Kreuze" of Haydn, the "Christus am Oelberg" of Beethoven, the "Grosse Passionsmusik" of Sebastian Bach, and the "Messiah" of Handel; but in none of these has it assumed the usual form of the Oratorio,—that is, a sacred drama set to music. Spohr has adopted, and thus interposed an additional difficulty in the way of his English translator. The Continental nations, Protestant as well as Catholic, are not conscious of any violation of propriety, still less of any irreverence, when they introduce the Saviour among the personages of an Oratorio, and set to music the words which he uttered. Regarding vocal music as the most perfect mode of giving expression to the strongest emotions of the soul, as well as of calling them into action, they attach no more impropriety to singing, than to reading them aloud. feeling on this subject is very different in England, in deference to which the present translation The words of Jesus are supposed to be repeated by the Apostle John. I suggested this to the highly gifted Author of the Work as the fittest mode of obviating the difficulty; and it not only received his sanction, but he had the kindness to make all the musical additions and alterations which were thus required.

I will not attempt to conceal that in some places I have, designedly, departed from the original text, particularly in the Chorus of the Disciples, at the commencement of the Second Part, which in the German refers (I think inappropriately at that moment) to the supposed language and demeanour of the Priests. In this case I have substituted passages from the Prophetic writings of the Old Testament, referable to the sufferings and death of the Messiah. The horrors of the Crucifixion are, in the original, detailed with such painful minuteness, that I have sometimes taken the liberty to modify or change the expressions.

The present Oratorio may teach its Author that to preserve a reputation is quite as difficult as to attain one. It will be measured against his "Last Judgement,"—a test to which few sacred compositions would bear to be subjected. Perhaps there is no instance of a similar work, under like circumstances, having attained such speedy celebrity and such high estimation as the "Last Judgement." Before the performance of this Oratorio at the Norwich Festival in 1830, Spohr was little known in this country beyond the orchestra and audience of the Philharmonic Concerts, while as a sacred writer he was unknown. Yet, produced without the sanction of metropolitan approbation, new to every performer and every auditor, it at once seized the public attention, and commanded the admiration of the most distinguished professors of every school. Its influence upon the feelings of an audience has been attested by expressions more decided and unequivocal than I ever remember to have witnessed. I speak not of the admiration which the musician derives from such a display of the power and the resources of his art, but of the homage which nature, though musically untutored, involuntarily yet willingly pays to genius. The throbbing heart, the moistened eye, the quivering lip, here bespeak the triumph of the Composer.

Spohr's writing appears to me the spontaneous effusion of a mind which, like that of our unrivalled Milton, "touched and purified with the hallowed fire of the altar, proposes to itself things of the highest hope, though of hardest attempting." The distinguishing attributes of Milton's muse, justly and eloquently described by an eminent writer of the present day, may be fitly applied to that of Spohr. "He rises instinctively, rather than by effort or discipline, to the contemplation of objects of grandeur and awfulness: impressing on his own mind the scenes he would describe, he clothes them in the imagination of the hearer with the same radiant hues under which they appeared to his own."

What will be the decision of the English musician, and the suffrage of the English public, on the relative excellences of "The Last Judgement" and the present Oratorio, it is not for me to anticipate; but if I had thought the fame of its author would be endangered by the publication of his later work, I should not have engaged in the arduous undertaking of giving it an English version.

I know there are many persons who will regard the subject of this Oratorio as an improper exercise for the musician's art. With every respect for an opinion conscientiously adopted and avowed, I venture to dissent from it. The arts have been tributary to the service of Religion in all ages of the Jewish and Christian churches; and of these, none is more calculated to enkindle the flame of devotion, to elevate the spirit, or to touch the heart, than Music. Our immortal Bard invoked the "mixed power" of "voice and verse," in order to "present to our high-raised phantasy

"That undisturbed song of pure concent,
Aye sung before the sapphire-coloured throne
To Him that sits thereon,
With saintly shout and solemn jubilee."

If there be truth as well as poetry in this sentiment, then are the musician and the poet deserving of honour in proportion as they labour to accomplish the high and holy purpose to which it points; in proportion as they succeed in carrying the mind out of the walks of every-day life, in order to raise it into a purer element, and breathe into it a profounder and more pious emotion.

There are minds over which no combination of sounds united to kindred words has the power to exercise any influence; but I think it impossible for any who are capable of being thus moved to hear such a composition as the present without responding to that powerful appeal which it makes, not to the senses only, but through them to the heart. The truly devotional spirit, the really grateful heart, loves to dedicate those gifts, with which its Maker has especially endowed it, to His glory. The impulse of one is to rear to His honour the stately temple; the inward prompting of another bids him dedicate to His praise the boldest flights of poetic inspiration; whilst a third aspires to "celebrate in glorious and lofty hymns the throne and equipage of God's almightiness; what He works, and what He suffers to be wrought, with high providence in His Church; to sing victorious agonies of Martyrs and Saints, and the deeds and triumphs of His servants."

The last is the end here proposed. I have only to hope that its purpose will be accomplished; and that while it affords to the musician the conviction that the springs of his art are perpetually gushing out afresh, and its waters ever flowing, it will serve the purpose for which it was especially designed, by awakening the devotion and cherishing the hopes of the Christian.

EDWARD TAYLOR.

3, Reyent Square, December 1st, 1836.

CALVARY.

Persons.

THE APOSTLE JOHN.
THE APOSTLE PETER.
JUDAS ISCARIOT.
MARY.
THE DISCIPLES.

THE PRIESTS.

CAIAPHAS.
PHILO.
NICODEMUS.
JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA.
THE WITNESSES.

THE PEOPLE.

PART THE FIRST.

OVERTURE.

CHORUS OF DISCIPLES.

GENTLE night, O descend, fall on our Master's path! while his cruel foes with looks of fury seek him, shelter, O shelter him, peaceful night!

FIRST DISCIPLE.

Say, where lingers he yet, breathing words of affection to his loved companions, or to God accents of piety?

SECOND DISCIPLE.

In Gethsemane's grove wanders he silently forth: there the chosen surround him as the stars circle round the moon.

CHORUS OF DISCIPLES.

Gentle night, O descend, fall on our Master's path! while his cruel foes with looks of fury seek him, shelter, O shelter him, peaceful night!

Recitative. John.

Ye faithful followers of your suffering Lord, Again receive me to your peaceful circle, That my o'erladen heart may vent its sorrows. His foes pursue him with relentless hate: With fear and horror has my startled ear O'erheard their cruel purpose; While the priests and elders, in their looks
Of dark ferocious exultation,
Like the impending thunder-cloud,
Menace their victim with destruction.
His friend deserts him—he that shared his love:
O Judas! thou, even thou art faithless;
Thy dark suspicious mind and thy proud heart
Have urged this deed of blackest treachery.
But see—the false one comes—'t is Judas!

Recitative. JUDAS ISCARIOT.

Oh whither—whither shall I flee?
Black night, I welcome all thy horrors!
Shelter me, ye rocks, ye caves;
What have I done—accursed wretch?
Theirs is the deepest infamy that tempted me.
No—no! 't is I alone that am the traitor,
Alone 't is I! Away, thou price of blood!
Before their feet I'll cast the treacherous bribe.
But Goo's own arm shall set His chosen free;
I have prepared the triumph that awaits him,
And shall behold him crown'd with power and glory.
Guiltless I stand,—my heart, my hands are clean,
Yet should he fall, their sinless victim,
O wretch accurst! 't is thou—thou art his murderer!

Air.

Woe, horror, grief, despair
Surround me, seize my soul!
I see him bleeding, forsaken, lost, betray'd!
The earth upheaves,—hell yawns beneath,
And the torrent rages around me.

Open thy friendly jaws—hide me, O grave!

Cover me, thou earth;

Hide me in thy dark abyss.

What is it holds me here? Apostate, away!

Betrayer, away to the silent grave!

There hide thee from the curses of all mankind.

Recitative. MARY.

What hope remains, if they prove false and faithless To whom his heart was ever open? Where shall he look for friendship or for succour, Deserted even by those who shared his love.

Solo. MARY.

Though all thy friends prove faithless,
Though all forsake and flee,
Thy love, all-gracious Master,
Shall bind me still to thee.

Though terrors gather round thee, Betray'd, reviled, forsaken, My faith shall cling unshaken To thee, my Saviour!

CHORUS OF DISCIPLES.

Though all thy friends prove faithless,
Though all forsake and flee,
Thy love, all-gracious Master,
Shall bind us still to thee.

Solo. John.

What do I see? Yes, 't is a multitude
With noise and tumult hither bending their steps:
O scene of direst horror! 'T is the Lord,
Their victim, led captive as a murderer!
Onward they press to Pilate's judgement-hall,
With looks of wild and savage exultation.
Almighty Lord! O hither send Thine Angel,
To loose the bonds that hold him.
Save, O save him! Preserve Thy chosen son
From the hands of his enemies.

Recitative.

Follow me!

And let us instant seek the palace:
His enemies even yet shall be dismay'd,
And shrink confounded from their bloody purpose.
But lo! who comes, all-trembling like a shadow
From the judgement-hall? Ha—the intrepid Peter!

Air. PETER.

Tears of sorrow, shame and anguish,
Oh how vain to tell my grief!
Whither shall I flee for comfort,
Or from conscience find relief?

When Thou, O Lord, shalt come in power and glory,
When heaven and earth before Thy bar are summon'd,
Thou wilt disown Thy treacherous false disciple.
Break, faithless heart, and end thy woe!

Recitative. MARY.

Thou—Peter!
Thou, the rock on which he built;
His eager champion, and his sworn defender!
Then hope indeed is lost, and nought can save him.
Eternal God, reveal Thy power,
O hear our supplication!

CHORUS OF DISCIPLES.

O Thou Eternal God, ruler of earth and heaven, who with power uncontrolled turnest the hearts of men, plead the cause of the righteous, whom even his friend betrays!

Solo. MARY.

Regard Thou the oppressed, whom even his friend betrays!

CHORUS.

Thou alone art his refuge, mighty in peril to save him.

Recitative. JOHN.

The portals of the judgement-hall unfold. What deepening gloom sits on each elder's brow! Lo one who folds around his limbs His ample robe, black as his heart, 'Tis Caiaphas, the High Priest! Yet Joseph, Friend of Gop and of our Lord, Near him assumes his place; And with him the noble Nicodemus: He will not join th' oppressors' council. But oh! what tranquil resignation beams With mild effulgence from our Master's brow! They feel—they own his spotless purity: To him each eye directs its anxious gaze. Now all is still,—no whisper breaks the silence. Behold you elder with dejected head; His trembling arms upon his breast he folds, And now he casts his eager looks to heaven. The High Priest bids, and he prepares to speak. O God, inspire him, grant him Thy heavenly guidance!

Solo. PHILO.

Father of our chosen nation!
With thy holy inspiration
Guide our counsels in this hour.
We, the avengers of Thine honour,
Here arraign this bold blasphemer:
Mighty God, reveal Thy power!

CHORUS OF PRIESTS.

Mighty God, reveal Thy power!

Solo. PHILO.

Yes, Heaven's spirit here descending, Strength to mortal weakness lending, Now inspires my faltering breath. Thou with magic art hast striven To usurp the power of Heaven; Impious man, thy doom is death!

CHORUS OF PRIESTS.

Impious man, thy doom is death!

Solo. PHILO.

Hear how God Himself condemns thee:
"Who blasphemes My Name shall perish"
From the Mount in thunder came:
Yet with arts this arch-deceiver
Hath ensnared the true believer:
Then aloud his guilt proclaim!

CHORUS OF PRIESTS.

Then aloud his guilt proclaim!

Solo. FIRST WITNESS.

He hath the temple profaned, Even in the season of prayer; And with impious pride This dissembler boasted, "I will destroy Gon's house, And in three days, unaided, I will build it again."

I swear, before GoD and man, that I heard these words from his mouth.

Solo. SECOND WITNESS.

He hath the Sabbath profaned,
Healing the halt and the blind;
Veiling his crime with smooth and artful speech.
Cæsar's power he disown'd:
Pardon he gave to sinners,
Goo's attribute alone.

I swear, before GoD and man, that I heard such words from his mouth.

Solo. PHILO.

Hear'st thou what these have said?
Hast thou aught in defence?
Do thy looks wander round, silent, undaunted?
Vain are thy arts, deceiver!

He who thy heart can search Its falsehood will detect.

Swear again, with a solemn oath, that ye heard these words from his mouth!

THE WITNESSES.

We swear it!

THE PRIESTS.

Ye swear it!

Recitative. John.

Ah Mary! Thou, o'erwhelm'd with grief and anguish, Hast sunk beneath the stroke: thy heart is broken! Yes, he will suffer: his foes have triumph'd o'er him. Teach us, O Gop, to say, "Thy will be done!"

Quartet. THE DISCIPLES.

Thou, Lord, art our refuge; hear us in trouble! Dark are Thy counsels, deep are Thy judgements: grant us, with faith unshaken, still to adore Thee!

Recitative. NICODEMUS.

That I our laws revere, ye know,
And worship God our Father.
Of him whom ye accuse, fearless I speak,
Whose blameless life shall be his best defence.
What sinful speech or act confirms this charge?
From doubtful words 't is drawn—yea, acts of mercy:
Pardon, not punishment, should ye award him.
He speaks from God, and all his life is holy.

Recitative. JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA.

To me he seem'd a prophet of the Lord:
Isaiah's spirit spake in all his words,
And wonders wrought he, as of old did Moses.
Such power can man derive from God alone,
Whose spirit rests upon His chosen servants.

CHORUS OF PRIESTS AND PEOPLE.

Shame! Shame! Would they the deceiver save? Would they defy our laws, and with sinners unite? They are Nazarenes, full of deceit and pride. Caiaphas! Caiaphas! Judgement! We are Abraham's children, heirs of the holy promise, both now and for ever. They are sons of darkness: cast them out! They shall not dwell with believers. Caiaphas! Judgement! God will speak through thee.

Solo. CAIAPHAS.

Then hear, ye people! To the dust my spirit sinks In deep abasement; horror fills my soul. Apostate! how shall man avenge his Maker? Thy punishment should come from Gop's own hand.



CHORUS OF PRIESTS AND PEOPLE.

Woe! woe! destruction on thee fall! Our reproach ages to come shall proclaim.

Recitative. CAIAPHAS.

I who enthroned on Moses' holy seat,
And who alone the yearly sacrifice for sin
With sacred rites may dare to offer, and thus
To purify the chosen nation, I by the living Gon
Adjure thee that thou tell us if thou be the Christ,
The only Son of the Eternal Father!

JOHN.

Jesus saith: "I am he whom thou sayest: hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting in great power on the throne of his Father, coming to judgement on the clouds of heaven."

CAIAPHAS.

Yourselves have heard, from his own mouth;
Thou, too, hast heard, O Jehovah, most mighty!
Here, as this priestly robe I rend,
Him do I sever from the chosen flock,
And instant death shall expiate his crime!

CHORUS OF PRIESTS.

Thy just commands are then fulfilled, Lord God of Hosts. Death! Death!

Recitative. NICODEMUS.

Stirs there no pity in your cruel hearts?
Will no one dare to intercede for mercy?
Then, guiltless sufferer, is thy death decreed:
Resign thy willing spirit to thy Maker,
As did the prophets whom they also murder'd,
Now throned in glory on the Lord's right hand,
To judge the race of Israel.

CHORUS OF PRIESTS AND PEOPLE.

Upon us be his blood, and on our children! Our law commands his death. Slowly let him breathe out his soul! To the Cross! to the Cross! There his lifeless form shall hang: no earth shall cover him, neither shall flowers spring upon his grave, nor tears bedew the tomb where sleeps his dust. Hence! hence! To the Cross! with slaves to die.

PART THE SECOND.

CHORUS OF DISCIPLES.

O look not down, thou glorious Sun, from out thy dwelling so heavenly bright, nor enlighten the path of death which Christ our Lord is doomed to tread.

Soli.

He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.

He hath carried our sorrows and borne our griefs: it hath pleased the Lord to bruise him, He hath put him to shame.

Weep, ye daughters of Jerusalem! he is numbered with transgressors, he is wounded for our sins.

As a lamb to the slaughter, so the Saviour is led to death. Our shepherd is smitten, and his sheep are scattered abroad: he is bruised for our transgressions!

CHORUS OF DISCIPLES.

Hide thou thy beams, O Sun! Veil in darkness and sorrow thy light!

Recitative. John.

Behold the altar where the Lamb shall suffer! What sorrow e'er was like to his? In torment doom'd to end his sinless life, A life to Gop's commands devoted, And to man's salvation.

Great Gop, forsake him not in life's last hour; O take from death its sting.

CHORUS OF PRIESTS AND PEOPLE.

King of Israel, help thou thyself! All hail! Come, thou mighty one, come down from off the Cross! Thou who hast trusted in God, let Him deliver thee, if He delight in thee. Save thyself, thou who savedst others! Hail, Israel's King! Come down, and we will bow before thee, proclaiming "Hosanna to the Son of David!"

Recitative. John.

Jesus saith: "Father! forgive them, they know not what they do."

O Mary, what dying love even for his murderers! Turn thou thine eyes upon our suffering Lord, Nor heed their savage triumph. The world hath known him not; but he shall go Unto his God and Father: we soon shall follow. O mother! hide thy tearful eye within this bosom: Let us approach him, that his dying look, Not on his foes, but upon us may fall: For we have loved him, and have followed him Even unto death.

He saith: "My mother, lo! that is now thy son: son, behold thy mother!"

Recitative. MARY.

Hast thou for me a look, a thought?
In bitter torment is thy love unshaken?
I live again! Such love
O'er death itself shall triumph.
My soul henceforth, this sinful world forgetting,
To heaven aspires, where pain is known no more,
Nor sin nor death, but every murmur dies;
Where all the chosen Saints, at thy right hand,
In endless joy shall dwell with thee for ever.

Air.

When this scene of trouble closes,
Lord, in Thee my trust reposes,
Love divine shall be my stay:
In that hour Thou wilt protect me,
And Thy mercy will direct me,
While unmurmuring I obey.
Vainly shall the grave close o'er him,
Death is powerless before him:
To Thee, Father, he ascends!
There, where sorrows cease to grieve us,
He will to himself receive us,
One in Thee, our Father, Friend!

Terzet. THE DISCIPLES.

Jesus, heavenly Master!
Thy love forsakes us not in this dark hour,
Shedding around its holy power;
Like some bright star that, beaming o'er us,
Dispels the shades of night before us.
Think Thou on us when death shall sever,
And guide us hence to rest for ever!

Solo. John.

Behold, the closing scene is near! Even now Relentless Death his prey is seizing,
Though strong in youth, with manly beauty blooming.
O suffering Lamb of God, for us Thou bleedest!
With anguish'd look his eyes are turned to heaven,
His prayers to God his Father are ascending:
He speaks—"My God, my God!
O why hast Thou forsaken me?"

CHORUS OF DISCIPLES.

All merciful God, in this dread hour of death do Thou regard him! Father, receive his spirit!

Recitative. John.

See, Gon's paternal love attends him still,
And Heaven's peace descends upon the sufferer!
The sting of death is past! He meekly bends
His sacred head, submissive, tranquil.
Eternal glory, never-ending honour,
And joy, await him in his Father's presence.
Again he speaks: O receive, Lord, in mercy
His last petition.
"Father! into Thy hands I commend my spirit.
It is finished!"

CHORUS OF DISCIPLES.

His earthly race is run, and life's last pang is o'er. O bear his deathless soul, ye Angels, to God above!

CHORUS OF PRIESTS AND PEOPLE.

What threatening tempest gathers, black as the night! Hither it rolls, and blots the sun from the firmament! Heard ye the whirlwind, how it howls like the moans of the dying? The earth is reeling; the abyss is yawning; the rocks are cleft asunder, and the mountains fall! The graves are bursting! Lo, angry spectres rise from their tombs: they flit before us with looks of vengeance: the dark cloud receives them, and whirls them aloft! Woe! woe! Mercy, O Thou Almighty One! these are Thy judgements! Spare us, Lord, and let not Thy fierce wrath consume us, but let our guiltless children plead before Thee!

Whose was the guilt, who was his murderer? Caiaphas, thou! The avenging thunder of God shall destroy thee—thou that saidst "On us be his blood, on us and on our children!" Lord, in mercy spare us! Call back to earth his spirit, Mighty Avenger, and we will kneel before him in deep remorse! Give us to see him—give us to hear him! Vain are our prayers and tears: his life returns no more! Away! away! from God's just vengeance: away! and seek the Mercy-scat: his wrath pursues us: Away!

Recitative. Joseph of Arimathea.

Ye flee from the avenger in the heavens,
But how shall ye escape the torment of your souls?
No man e'er died like him,—like him
None ever lived.
Angels and men shall speak his endless praise:
He was the Christ, the Son of the Almighty.

CHORUS OF DISCIPLES.

He was the Christ, the Son of the Almighty.

Recitative. JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA.

Ye friends of Jesus, who his steps attended, Fulfill your last sad duty to your Master. O Lamb of God, thy life of love is ended: Within the dark and silent sepulchre, From earthly cares reposing, sleep undisturb'd, As sleeps the infant on its mother's breast; Until by God awaken'd; when all thy chosen, Cleansed by Thy blood, shall meet before Thee.

CHORUS OF DISCIPLES.

Beloved Lord, thine eyes we close,
Here earthly sorrows, cares and woes
No more assail Thee!
Sleep till angelic hosts on high,
When Thou shalt gain Thy native sky,
Triumphant hail Thee!
Beyond the starry-spangled dome
Thy spirit seeks its heavenly home,
To God's right hand ascending:
Thy life of toil and suffering o'er,
His peace awaits Thee evermore,
His glory never ending!

C A L V A R Y.

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